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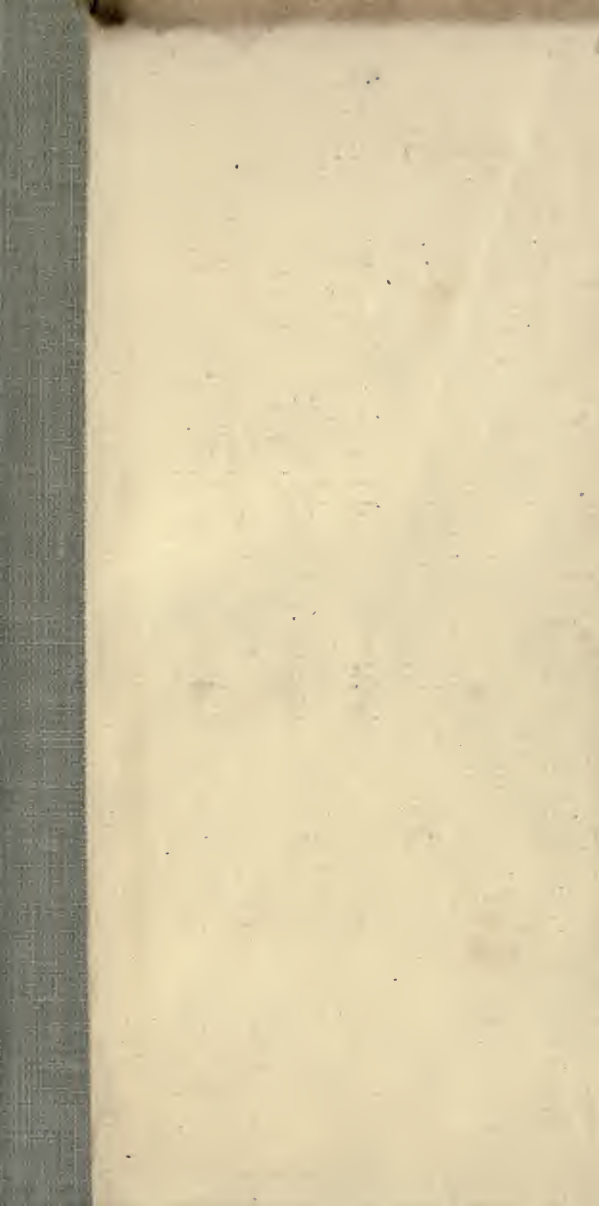
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Old World Series



THE PEARL



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**THE PEARL**  
AN ENGLISH VISION-POEM OF  
THE FOURTEENTH CENTURY  
DONE INTO MODERN VERSE  
BY MARIAN MEAD



Portland, Maine  
**THOMAS B. MOSHER**  
*Mdccccviij*

925  
P359  
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Van Gelder paper con-  
sists of 925 copies.*



**HENRY MORSE STEPHENS**

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THOMAS B. MOSHER  
1908**

## THREE QUATRAINS

### I

*We lost you — for how long a time —  
True Pearl of our poetic prime !  
We found you, and you gleam re-set  
In Britain's lyric coronet.*

ALFRED, LORD TENNYSON.

### II

*A little grave, a nameless man's distress,  
And lo ! a wail of lyric tenderness,  
Unheard, unseen for half a thousand years,  
Asks from love's equal loss the praise of tears.*

S. WEIR MITCHELL.

### III

*Pearl ! jewel that art beauty born of pain ;  
Pure day-gleam of our poesy, dawning twice ;  
Shine still for mortal hearts, that still attain  
From grief to vision, and the pearl of price.*

MARIAN MEAD.

# THE HISTORY OF THE

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## INTRODUCTION







## INTRODUCTION

THE vision, that literary form so dear to mediæval writers, is commonly a very conventional setting. As, at a later period, a certain kind of o'er-vaulting poetic ambition would embody itself in a quantum of sentimental episodes, and a goodly number of battles, and be called an epic, so equally as a matter of course did the romantic or didactic fancy of this age feel the need of clothing itself in the pageantry of the dream. Usually such poetry presents classical figures or personified abstractions, Love, Reason, and the like, appropriately clad, and wandering about, probably, in delightful gardens, often for no particular purpose, apparently, save the edification of chance dreamers. The *Romaunt of the Rose* is of course the great model of this type; and the three chief English poets contemporary with the unknown author of *The Pearl*, Chaucer, Gower, and Langland, employed the vision-form as a convenient vehicle of their varying inspirations. Chaucer, indeed, as he came into the fullness of his powers, threw off the machinery of the dream. When he needed

a framework for the *Canterbury Tales*, the conventional was left behind, with such allegorical and classical fancy as had made a setting for Gower's stories, and the wonderful nature and realism of the great *Prologue* were introduced into English literature by him who is justly called its father.

But of the vision-poem there are two examples, at least, as to which the obvious criticism entirely falls. As Shakespeare, of the dramatic form so popular in his day, so subject to all the extravagances, good and bad, of popularity, created a thing ideally apart, a marvel for all time; as Spenser, of the already ruinous fabric of chivalrous romance, built a lasting kingdom for those who love beauty; so nobly in its season was perfected the flowering of the vision. And when we have done honour to the great cathedral of the *Divine Comedy*, skirted by its studious cloister of the *Convito*, heralded by its slender, soaring campanile of the *Vita Nuova*, let us seek, not so far from the lofty sculptured choir of the *Paradiso*, the baptistery of *The Pearl*,—smaller, humbler, as befits the shrine of childhood, yet, though the hand that wrought it was of different race, akin in structure and material, and no unworthy companion. For this poem too, while so much less in power and aim and

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scope, is a "vision" of things eternal, in no mere convention of name or form, but in clearness and radiance of actual insight.

The poem, beginning with the lament of a father for his infant daughter, under the symbol of a pearl, probably suggested by her name of Margaret, or Margery, passes on to a revelation in dream of her bliss in Paradise.

Leaving aside for the moment its spiritual aspect, *The Pearl* has a quality which made it a remarkable product of its own time, and should serve to endear it to readers of our own,—its lyrical power. For sustained though varying lyrical quality, and for depth of personal note, *The Pearl* is surely unique in the literature of its time, as handed down to us. While the lyric strain had been sounded very sweetly in our language, its notes had been slender and scattered. Not till Sidney and Spenser would the English lyric realise its possibilities of form and feeling. Remarkable, therefore, is this poem in its expression of deep personal emotion in an age when such expression, apart from purely religious utterances, was scarcely known, as well as in its truly lyrical singing quality. How touching, for instance, how permeated with a deep passion of grief, a passion creating its own music, is the greet-

ing of the bereaved father to his child, first seen in the light of the Earthly Paradise :

" O Perle," quod I, " in perlez pyght,  
 Art thou my perle that I haf playned,  
 Regretted by myn one, on nyghte?  
 Much longeynge haf I for the layned, (hidden)  
 Sythen into gresse thou me aglyghte ;  
 Pensyf, payred, I am forpayned,  
 & thou in a lyf of lykyng lyghte  
 In paradys erde, of stryf unstrayned.

What wyrde hath hyder my juel wayned,  
 And don me in thys dol & gret daunger?  
 Fro we in twynne wern townen and twayned,  
 I haf ben a joylez juelere."

How wonderful, again, in its throb of joy,  
 is the almost ecstatic outburst of praise  
 beginning

" O maskelez Perle, in perlez pure,  
 That berez," quod I, " the perle of prys."

(Stanza 63.)

which, in four antiphonal stanzas, strikes a new key, and introduces the higher-pitched Apocalyptic portion of the poem, the description of the mystic Lamb, and the bliss of the Heavenly City.

*The Pearl* is eminently a piece to read, and read again, for, as Dr. Osgood has said, "At first reading, the course of the poem is likely to seem interrupted with dull digressions, out of proportion to the rest. But, if it is viewed as a whole, its various parts"

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sink into a right and helpful relation to each other." Familiarity shows every part vital, even throbbing with life. Grief, tenderness, despair, a sense of the terror and tragedy which lie in wait for man's soul, rapture, faith, delight in the mysterious loveliness of Paradise, sympathy with the divine law of the spiritual kingdom of the blest,—all these lyrical motives are shot and interwoven through the poem, and sound in moving and various harmony.

The verse-plan of the piece is admirably conceived. Its divisions, its linking refrains, its recurring rhymes, the movement of the verse, simple, flexible, and harmonious, are all lyrically expressive. The refrain, (omitted only twice, at the beginning of the 52nd and 61st stanzas) has a special value, enclosing, as it were, each stanza between two deeper emotional breathings, which at once emphasise its separate force, and prepare the mind for a fresh flight. Simpler than a sonnet-sequence, the poem is equally a linked chain; and more strictly narrative in spirit than either the usual sonnet-sequence or the *In Memoriam*, which it also suggests, the more ballad-like effect, due to the refrain, is entirely suitable. The stanza in structure somewhat resembles the modern sonnet, consisting as it does of an octave followed by a quatrain,

nearly always distinguished in subject or feeling, or both. When the quatrain does not introduce a new thought, or a heightening of emotion, this is usually done by the two (once by the three) concluding lines. The combination of alliteration with elaborate rhyme is interesting, the poet having, as Mr. Gollancz says, one hand towards the earlier English, the other towards the French influences; and the sentiment of the piece is likewise a mingling of the homely "Saxon" and the courtly "Norman."

The lyric impulse gathers into one concentrated brightness many rays and colours of the poetic consciousness, and a glance at some of these may add to an appreciation of *The Pearl*. The poet's interest in nature, for instance, seems very real, and not at all that conventional admiration of mediæval writers for the garden or park, nature tamed and adorned, to which even Chaucer in his earliest work was bound. But our poet takes us where there were cliffs, and his fair forest has rocks; he leads us among hills, which he hints were sometimes steep; he gives us the wild image of thunder rolling among storm-darkened tors. Those who recall the aversion, almost rising to horror, of our forefathers, nearly until modern times, for those rugged aspects of nature which to

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us are so satisfying and sublime, will perceive the introduction of such features into Paradise to be quite worthy of remark. If the poet, as often supposed, was of northern origin, here, no doubt, was an instinctive recalling of early surroundings. Again, he writes with pleasure of downs and dales, woods and waters and noble plains, hedges and "rich rivers;" betraying an eye accustomed to delight in broad prospects, a sense of landscape. He is a lover of moon and stars; when the heavenly procession suddenly, mystically, becomes visible to him, it is

Ryght as the maynful mone con rys  
Er thenne the day-glem drive al doun.

The gems that pave the wondrous pool shine  
through the water's depths

As stremande sterrez quen strothe men slepe.

Even Chaucer cared little for the glories of night, noticing the stars chiefly to compare to them his roguish Friar's eyes.

The poem for its time is rich in suggestions of colour. The picture in stanzas 7-8, of crystal cliffs beset with woods, the tree-stems all of deep bright blue, with leaves like burnished silver, the gravel underfoot of orient pearl; these groves all adorned

with ripe fruits, and filled with the motion of flame-coloured birds, paints for us an unearthly beauty, and shows keen sensibility to the value of colours. The poet loved the hues of gold and jewels, placing above all gems, as "gentyleste in uch a plyte," the amethyst, "purpre, with ynde blente." He sees his Pearl, however, arrayed only in white and pearls, her shining hair giving that glory of gold so tenderly hinted at in the opening lines of the poem,

Perle, . . . .  
To(o) clanly clos in gold so clere !

Spenser, too, was to see the most beloved women of his imagination, Una, Britomart, Belphebe, Florimell, in these pure and royal hues. Our poet is notably a lover of light,—of whiteness, silver, gold, jewels, glass, crystal cliffs, river-banks of beryl; he delights in the lovely brightness of emerald and sapphire seen through clear water; in the radiant river flowing from the heavenly throne; in the "worthly lyght" that shines upon that river's brim, before which moon and planets and the sun himself are but poor and pale. He has assimilated the glorious imagery of the Apocalypse, its splendour of burnished gold and lucent gem, as well as its picture of the state of the blessed.

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With the Apocalypse, indeed, a Christian father would at that day be likely to have his mind filled, as he fell in a trance of sorrow on the little mound. Thus, inspired by a deeper pain, a higher passion, than Chaucer knew, bloomed this lyric of childhood fairer even than his tale of the little singing martyr; thus grew this conception of infant death, more unified, more fruitful, than De Quincey's touching and lofty description of his childhood's bereavement. Though the Apocalypse be not to us what it was to our forefathers, though the theology of *The Pearl*, as of the *Divine Comedy*, is partly outgrown as literal belief, yet, since a symbolism is necessary to express the truths of spiritual being, where, after all, is one more magnificent or more touching than that of John the Divine? Of these visionary worlds the Pearl maiden says, "Thou thinkest me here, because here thine eyes behold me," and Beatrice, "Souls are presented in this sphere only for thy better understanding." Their real mode of being the eye of earthly man cannot see, nor his heart conceive.

Of the *Divine Comedy* and *The Pearl* the theological scope differs as does that of the poems themselves. Dante, progressing through the cycle of sin, purification, and beatitude, takes for his own the whole expe-

rience of the soul, as conceived in his day. The *Pearl* is a glorification of unblemished innocence,—"the innocent are aye saved by right," is the burden of its theological teaching. And this exaltation of spotlessness, being no lifeless product of monkish ideas, but the accompaniment of an overwhelming human grief, makes the poem a beautiful thing apart, like those saintly and seraphic beings given us by Fra Angelico, on whom no shadow of sin has ever fallen.

It remains to touch upon the mysticism of *The Pearl*—it would seem better to say, its "imagination penetrative," as illuminating conditions of the unseen world; for it was the faculty which grasps and reveals the vital heart of things, their essential quality, that Ruskin so named. It is by this faculty that *The Pearl* is worthy to stand as a little shrine beside the mighty fabric of Dante. Lacking though it does the tools of the Florentine's imagination, the magnificence of his line, the great similes and white-hot figures which force home his thought, yet the English poem, simple indeed as a little child, like it is through all its body transparent to the informing soul; the poet's exaltation, to use an image of his own, passes to us like a gleam through glass,— "as glente thurgh glas that glowed and

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glyght." Thus, the father's first sight of his lost child, shining in her white and gold beyond the dividing water, — the "gladande glory" which filled his soul, — his longing to call her, — the sudden abashment at thought of the strange place he saw her in, — the sting at his heart as she in her beauty lifted up her white brow, — the dread and doubt which fell upon him, — their dialogue, the father's plaints, the child's grave but gentle reproofs, — her solicitude, as a soul forever lifted above all grief, to open his eyes and strengthen him, her joy in his amendment of feeling, — all these breathe not only the mystery of other worlds, but, as with Dante, also a concentrated passion which makes them real. This passion it is which has kept the poem so free from allegory, that pitfall of its age, a pitfall indeed too common to frigid imagination in any age, as seen in the *Kilmeny* of James Hogg, for instance, where a fine poetic conception of the "land of vision" is constantly being spoiled by the failure of strong feeling, and degenerating into feeble commonplace.

Through this gift of "strong imagination," which is as much of the heart as of the mind, our poet, like Dante, beholds the heavenly kingdom with an illuminating clearness. Both tell us that there difference of spiritual

rank or station means no lessening of joy. Piccarda's teaching is also that of *The Pearl*. The parable of the vineyard, so feelingly retold, has already illustrated this doctrine, while the thirteen stanzas following it have developed the reasonableness of the salvation of innocents, by both grace and justice,—“the grace of God is gret inoghe,” and “the innocent is ay saf by ryght;” this part of the poem, the climax of its argument, betraying a touching eagerness to demonstrate, beyond chance of doubt, the welfare of the dead child. But now, rising on stronger pinions, without question or debate the poet accepts his spiritual teaching. “Each one's bliss is perfect and best;” whoever arrives in the kingdom of the Living God is made king or queen of all, yet no one's sovereignty diminishes another's, and each would desire another's increase of power if it were conceivable that this could add to his happiness. Thus, also, increase in the number of the partakers of joy makes it more, not less:

“The mo the myrrier, so God me blesse.  
In compayny gret our luf con thryf  
In honour more & neuer the lesse.”

So the greeting of the blessed spirits to Dante, “Lo, one who shall increase our

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loves ! ” They are to him “ perpetual flowers of the eternal gladness, which make all your odours seem to me as only one.” (Par. XIX, Norton.)

Light is the great expression to us of the joy of the purified spirits. As Beatrice's eyes at every upward flight increase in glory, so the father, looking into the celestial throng to see “ how thay wyth lyf wern last and lade,” beholds his “ little queen, . . among her peers that was so *white*.”

“ Lorde ! mucche of mirthe wacz that ho made ! ”

he cries. For not only is the deep and mystic joy of the *Paradiso* apparent in *The Pearl*,—

The fyrrer I folghed those floty valez,  
The more strengthe of joye myn herte straynez,—

but there is a spirit of mirth, sweet and childlike, according well with the subject and simplicity of the poem.

The tie, even more human and touching than that which holds Dante to Beatrice, between the father and his child, like that, is the more moving for being lightly borne upon. That pregnant phrase of his, on seeing the little maiden shining in glory beneath the crystal cliff, — “ I knew hyr wel, I hade sen hyr ere,” irresistibly recalls the lover's

cry in the *Blessed Damozel*, "I heard her tears!"

Such beings as Beatrice and Pearl, no longer only the beloved woman or the beloved child, but spirits purified and immortal, in the fulness of their joy and vision, poetry can shadow forth only through aid of that inward comprehension which Ruskin called the highest form of the imaginative faculty. Of them we read with the conviction, that if mortal might hold communion in the world of the unseen with a "blessed ghost," such would be its presence, its manner of speech, the conditions of its being, in

an ampler ether, a diviner air,  
And fields invested with purpureal of gleams.

The sight of "that fayre region," of "alle tho syghtez so quike and queme" (living and fair), reconciles the bereaved man to his loss, and the poem, begun in sorrow's storm, closes in the peace of faith. Love, seeing that it is well with the beloved one, joyfully acquiesces in its own deprivation, and acknowledges the wisdom of a Higher Will. The vision, though ending untimely, and not, like Dante's, culminating in a supreme revelation of the Divine Nature, yet fulfills its own simpler purpose,—the stilling of a personal sorrow in the comfort-

## INTRODUCTION

ing sense of the reality and nearness of that Divine Purpose which, in those old days, was conceived, not as immanent in this world, but as apart, and coming only by act of grace into relation with this "doel-dougoun."

Lost for so many centuries, and still insufficiently recognised, surely *The Pearl* will yet come to its own, and fit audience find. For to the spirit in every age it must speak, through its lyric note of sorrowing love, its mysterious lightings of the unseen, its deep reconciliation of the soul with the "Love that moves the sun and the other stars."

### ERRATUM.

P. xxii. Delete "of" in the line so as to read :  
"And fields invested with purpureal gleams."







## THE PEARL



*In la sua voluntade è nostra pace.*  
*In His will is our peace.*

PEARL, pleasing to prince's will,  
Set all-too sweetly in clearest gold!  
A gem such precious worth to fulfill  
Ne'er saw I from Orient, that say I hold.  
So round, so purely radiant still,  
So smooth was it, so small of mould,—  
Wherever bright gems I judg'd with skill,  
Apart and alone I must it hold.

Alas! in an arbour it from me roll'd;  
In the grass I lost it, the ground it got;  
I pine, sore-wounded, in love-bonds old,  
For that pearl, mine own, withouten spot.

## II

Since, in that spot where from me it sprung,  
Oft have I waited, wanting that sore,  
That whilom was wont to banish my wrong,  
Renew my bliss, and my weal restore;—  
It could but crushing grief prolong,  
My breast but burn and swell the more;  
Yet never, methought, so sweet a song,  
As in those still hours my heart stole o'er.

Ah! was it not much that there I bore?  
Her fair hue so hid in clayey clot!  
O mould, thou marrest a blissful store,—  
My Pearl, mine own, withouten spot.

### III

That spot with spices must o'erspread,  
Where wealth like this to waste has run ;  
Blossoms white, and blue, and red,  
Shine there full sheen against the sun ;  
Flower and fruit shall be fadeless, fed  
Where *that* passed down to grave-mould's dun.  
All grass must grow from grains that are dead ;  
No wheat is else for the garner won.

From good each good is aye begun ;  
So seemly the seed, it faileth not,  
That spices should spring from that sweetest one,  
That precious pearl withouten spot.

### IV

In that spot I have spoken on,  
I enter'd into that arbour green,  
In August, at a high season,  
When the corn was cut with sickles keen.  
On the mound where my pearl slipp'd away, time ago,  
Herbs grew shading, all gay and sheen ;  
There were gillyflower, ginger, and gromwell thereon,  
And peonies powder'd thick between.

Fair was it there, and if goodly seen,  
Goodlier still smelt the fragrant plot,  
Where lies that treasure, I wot and ween,  
My precious pearl withouten spot.

On that spot I clasp'd my hands, — that mound,  
 With sorrow full cold my heart it caught,  
 A sudden grief did my soul confound,  
 Though reason peace within me taught.  
 I mourn'd my pearl that there was bound,  
 With fiercest doubts that stubborn fought;  
 Though Christ's own comfort might be found,  
 My wretched will in woe aye wrought.

I fell on that mound with flowers fraught; —  
 Such odour through my senses shot,  
 A dream came upon me, deeper was naught,  
 Of that precious pearl withouten spot.

## VI

**F**ROM the spot my spirit sprang into space,  
 While my body dream'd, to the mound it clove.  
 My ghost was gone, by God's own grace,  
 Where wonders and mysteries are, to rove.  
 I knew not in this world the place,  
 But I found me set where were cliffs above :  
 Toward a forest I turn'd my face,  
 Where rocks of splendour in richness throve.  
     The brightness of them no belief would move,  
     Their gleaming glory that shone so there ;  
     For never was web that mortal wove,  
     Of splendour half so rich and fair.

## VII

Fair adorned those hillsides lay,  
 With crystal cliffs full clear of kind ;  
 Bright holt and wood about them stay,  
 And their boles are blue as blue of Ind.  
 Like burnish'd silver the light leaves play,—  
 On ev'ry branch thick they trembl'd and shin'd,—  
 Where open glade giveth them gleam of day,  
 Their shimmering sheen full glory doth find.  
     The gravel that underfoot we grind,  
     Is precious pearl of Orient there ;  
     The sunbeam pales, and grows but blind,  
     Before that splendour rich and fair.

## VIII

So fair those hills, so fair and dear,  
My soul her griefs forgot, I weet.  
Of their fresh fruits the fragrance mere  
To breathe gives life, like very meat.  
Mated in peace the birds fly near,  
Both small and great in flame-hues sweet ;  
But cithern string or minstrel here,  
Their lovely mirth may not repeat ;  
    For when those birds their wings do beat,  
    They sing in sweet accord so rare,  
    Such gracious glee may no man meet,  
    As hear and see such splendour fair.

## IX

So fair adorned in richest guise  
That forest where fortune bade me wend,  
Set forth the beauty that in it lies,  
No tongue ever may that this life doth lend.  
I walk'd on, ever in blissful wise ;  
No hill too toilsome was to ascend ;  
The further in forest, the fairer did rise  
Plain, plants, and spice, and fruits without end,  
    Hedgerows, and paths, and rich rivers, penn'd  
    In steep banks, glistening like gold thread rare ;  
    To the shore of a water my steps did bend,—  
    Ah Lord ! how dear was that splendour fair !

The splendour fair of that water deep,  
 Its lucent banks of the beryl bright!  
 Sweet was the rushing water's sweep  
 With murmurings many, and swift its flight.  
 A brightness of stones from the depths did leap;  
 Like a gleam through glass they glimmer'd to sight,  
 Or as stars refulgent, while safe men sleep,  
 Shine in the sky through the winter night;  
     For every pebble the pool that dight  
     Was emerald, sapphire, or gem as rare,  
     That all the water glister'd with light;  
     So dear and rich was that splendour fair.

## XI

**T**HE splendour fair of downs and dales,  
 Of wood, and waters, and noble plain,  
 Bred in me bliss, and soften'd my bales,  
 Gave peace to my stress, destroy'd my pain.  
 A stream whose current strongly sails  
 I far'd adown, with teeming brain ;  
 The farther I followed those water'd vales,  
 The stronger joy did my heart constrain.  
     Fortune deals ever as she is fain,  
     Whether solace she send, or sorrow sore ;  
     But wight that her good-will once doth gain,  
     Seeks to have ever more and more.

## XII

More weal was I ware of in that wise  
 Than I could tell of, though time gave aid,  
 For earthly heart might not suffice  
 That a tenth of that gladness should be said.  
 In truth, I thought that Paradise  
 Beyond those broad banks close was laid ;  
 I thought the water some fair device,  
 A mere that blissful shores embay'd ;  
     Beyond the stream, by slope or glade,  
     I hop'd to see the city soar ;  
     But the water was deep, I durst not wade ;  
     And ever I long'd, aye more and more.

### XIII

More and more that longing I bare,  
 The longing to see what lay beyond,  
 For if goodly it was where I did fare,  
 Far lovelier was the farther land.  
 I gaz'd, and stumbl'd, searching there,  
 A ford I sought at my demand ;  
 But of still more dangers was I ware,  
 The further I stepp'd along the strand :  
     Methought no peril should have bann'd  
     My venture to that blessed shore,  
     When fresh delight show'd near at hand  
     That mov'd my mind still more and more.

### XIV

More marvels smote my soul beguil'd ;  
 I saw, beyond that mere so fair,  
 A crystal cliff, in light that smil'd,  
 And radiance royal stream'd in air ;  
 And at its foot there sat a child,—  
 A maiden gracious, debonnaire,  
 In white all glistening, undefil'd :  
 (I knew her well, I had seen her ere).  
     Like gleaming gold most pure and rare,  
     So shone she bright on the farther shore ;  
     Long time I look'd upon her there ;  
     The longer, I knew her more and more.

The more I look'd on her fair face,  
 Her tender shape when I had seen,  
 Such glory of gladness did me grace,  
 As seld before in my soul had been.  
 To call her then I wish'd apace,  
 But abashment seiz'd me, swift and keen;  
 I saw her in so strange a place,  
 That shock might chill my heart, I ween.

Then lifted she up her forehead sheen,  
 Her face like the ivory white upbore,—  
 That stung my heart, astounded clean;  
 And ever the longer, more and more.

## XVI

**M**ORE than I list, my dread arose ;  
 I stood full still, and durst not call ;  
 With open eyes, and mouth shut close,  
 I stood as docile as hawk in hall.  
 I thought, unearthly were these shows ;  
 I dreaded what should at last befall,  
 Lest she should escape, whom my soul there chose,  
 Ere I could drive my prize to wall.

That gracious one then, most pure of all,  
 So smooth, so small, so lovely-slight,  
 Rose up in her array royal,  
 A precious thing in pearls bedight. ✓

## XVII

Pearls bedight, of princely fees,  
 There might a man by grace have seen,  
 When she, as fresh as flor-de-lis, ✓  
 Straight down the bank her steps did lean ;  
 All dazzling white was her fair amice ;  
 Open the sides, and border'd between  
 With pearls, the fairest and fittest to please  
 That ever I saw yet with mine een.

Wide and large were the sleeves, I ween,  
 With doubl'd pearl adorn'd and bright ;  
 The kirtle, too, of selfsame sheen,  
 With precious pearls around bedight.

## XVIII

With a crown was the maid bedight,  
Of pearls, and of none other stone,  
Pinnacled high, of pearls pure white,  
With figur'd flowers thickly sown.  
Her head, save for that, uncover'd quite;  
Her hair fell all about her thrown;  
As duke or as earl she was grave to the sight;  
More white her hue than the walrus-bone;  
    Like pure shorn gold her soft locks shone,  
    On her shoulders lying, all loose and light;  
    Their colour deep scarce brighter grown  
    From the precious pearls that her bedight.

## XIX

Bedight and broider'd each hem and seam  
That opening, and side, and wrist secure,  
With pearls, with only the white pearls' gleam;  
And burnish'd white was her vesture.  
But a flawless pearl, a marvel, I deem,  
Amid her breast was set full sure;  
Mind of mortal might faint and dream,  
Ere ever its worth he could well measure.  
    I think no tongue is, could endure  
    A fitting tale to tell of that sight,  
    It was so white and clear and pure,  
    That precious pearl that her bedight.

Bedight with pearls, she, rare and dear,  
 Came down on the farther shore more nigh;  
 No gladder man betwixt Greece and here,  
 When she reached the water's edge, than I.  
 (More than aunt or niece to me was she near,  
 So ever the more my joy rose high.)  
 Then proffer'd that wonder speech to mine ear,  
 Low bending to me, full womanly;  
     From her head the rich crown she put by,  
     And blithely hail'd me with greeting light.  
     Well for me that I was born, I cry,  
     That sweet to answer, with pearls bedight.

## XXI

“O PEARL,” said I, “with pearls bedight,  
 Art thou my pearl that I have plain’d,  
 And regretted, lone in the lonely night?  
 Much longing for thee I have sustain’d  
 Since down in the grass thou didst slip from sight.  
 Thought-weary and worn am I, sore pain’d,  
 While thou to a life of joyance bright  
 In Paradise cam’st, of woe unconstrain’d.

What fate hath hither my jewel entrain’d,  
 And thrown me in dolour and grief and fear?  
 Since we two apart were torn and distract’d,  
 I have been but a joyless jeweller.”

## XXII

That jewel then, begemm’d so fair,  
 Rais’d up her face, with eyes of gray;  
 With the orient pearl she crown’d her hair,  
 And soberly then did she say:

“Sir, ye have well mistaken there,  
 To say your pearl is lost away,  
 That is kept in so comely a coffer’s care,  
 As here in this garden, gracious-gay;

Herein forever to dwell and play,  
 Where sin and mourning come never near;  
 Here were the casket for thee, in fay,  
 If thou wert a well-taught jeweller.

### XXIII

" But, jeweller gentle, if thou didst lose  
 Thy joy, for a gem that was dear to thy mind,  
 Methinks thou but unwisely chose,  
 And with scanty reason thy soul dost blind;  
 For that which thou lost was but a rose,  
 That flower'd and fail'd in the way of kind;  
 Now, through the casket that holdeth it close,  
 For a precious pearl it is seal'd and sign'd:  
     Yet thou thy fate a thief dost find,  
     That thy naught for something hath bought, full clear;  
     To what cureth thy ills thou blame dost bind;  
     Thou art no kindly jeweller."

### XXIV

A jewel to me then was this guest,  
 Jewels the soft words she did say.  
 " I-wis," said I, " my blissful-best,  
 My great distress thou dost allay;  
 To be excus'd I make request;  
 I trow'd my pearl was lost to the day;  
 Tis found, now feast shall I make, and rest,  
 And dwell with it in woodland gay,  
     And praise my Lord, and his laws, for aye,  
     That hath me brought this bliss so near;  
     Were I with thee beyond this water's way,  
     I were now a joyful jeweller."

" Jeweller," said that gem serene,  
 " Why jest men thus? so mad ye be!  
 Three words thou spok'st in one, I ween,  
 Full unadvis'd, in sooth, all three.  
 Thou nothing know'st what thou dost mean,  
 Thy words before thy wits do flee.  
 Thou sayest, for thus thine eyes have seen,  
 Thou deem'st me in truth in this vale to be;  
     Again, thou sayest, in this country  
     Thyself shall dwell with me, even here;  
     The third, thou wouldst pass this water free:—  
     That may no joyful jeweller.

## XXVI

“**I** HOLD that jeweller little to praise,  
 That trusts too well what he sees with eye;  
 And blameful, and wanting in noble ways,  
 Who believes our Lord would speak a lie,  
 That leally promis’d your life to raise,  
 Though fortune fell on your flesh to die.  
 Ye make of his words but a twisted maze,  
 That nothing believe but ye see it, ay,  
 And that is the sin of arrogancy,  
 That any good man doth most ill beseem,—  
 Naught to believe, to trust or try,  
 But his own reason it truth shall deem.

## XXVII

“Deem now thyself if thou didst use  
 Such words as from man to God are fit.  
 To dwell in this kingdom thou dost choose;  
 Thou wert better first ask leave for it,  
 And yet that boon thou well might’st lose.  
 Thou willest over this water to flit;  
 Ah, first another lot thee ensues;  
 Thy corpse must lie cold in clods of the pit,  
 For its worth in Paradise groves was quit;  
 Our forefather brought it to ill esteem;  
 By drear death must every mortal be smit,  
 Ere the Lord him worthy to cross here deem.”

## XXVIII

“Deem’st thou me doom’d,” said I, “my sweet,  
To dolour again, then am I undone!  
Now I have found what from me did fleet,  
Must I lose it again ere my life is run?  
Why shall I at once it miss and meet?  
But pain for me my pearl has won!  
What serve treasures but gar men greet,  
If they find but to lose in grief anon?  
I reckon not to sink low, from this hour on;  
Home and land to leave no ill shall seem;  
For when my pearl from me is gone,  
What is it but endless dolour to deem?”

## XXIX

“Thou deem’st to have but dole and distress,”  
Then said that being, “why dost thou so?  
Through clamour of grief, from losses less,  
To those far greater full oft men go.  
Thou better thyself shouldst guide and bless,  
And praise God ever, in weal or woe.  
Thy anger avails thee not a cress;  
Who needs must suffer may rage forego;  
For though thou dance as any doe,  
Chafe, and cry out, and with fierce ire teem,  
Since thou may’st no farther, to or fro,  
Thou must abide what He well shall deem.”

"The Lord shall deem, and he shall ordain,  
 Nor will he swerve one foot from his way;  
 Nothing to thee shall be the gain .  
 Though never for sorrow thou shouldst be gay.  
 Leave thy chiding, and stint thee to strain,  
 And seek His bliss as fast as thou may;  
 Thy prayer to his pity may attain,  
 And mercy her crafts to thee display;  
     His comfort can thy languor allay,  
     Thy grief turn back like a glancing gleam;  
     For marr'd ye or mended, in woe or away,  
     All lies with him to allot and deem."

## XXXI

**T**HEN deem'd I to that damosel,  
 "My Lord will not hold me in wrath and scorn,  
 Though I rave as the rushing words impel,  
 For its bursting griefs my heart have torn,  
 As springing waters from source upwell.  
 My soul be aye in His mercy borne!  
 Rebuke me never with words so fell,  
 Dear one, ador'd, though I err, forlorn,  
     But show thy comfort to me who mourn,  
     Thinking with pity aye on this,  
     That for thy sake, grief is my fellow sworn,  
     That once wast ground of all my bliss.

## XXXII

"My bliss, my bale, ye have been both;  
 For both the heavier is my moan.  
 Since thou wast taken away, in troth,  
 I never knew where my pearl was gone;  
 Now I see it, my sorrow go'th.  
 We, when we parted, as one were grown:  
 God forbid that we now be wroth,  
 We meet so seldom by stock or stone.  
     Though fair and courteous ye speak on,  
     I am dust, and lack manners fair, I wis;  
     But Christ his mercy, and Mary, and John,  
     These are the ground of all my bliss.

## XXXIII

"In bliss I see thee, and joyance dear  
And I a man of mournful fate ;

It takes full little from your cheer,  
Though I have often hurts so great.

But now that I have won so near,

I would beseech, without debate,

With sweet consent thou let me hear

What life ye lead here, soon and late ;

For I am full glad that your estate

Is raised to worship and weal, I wis ;

Of all my joy the highway straight

It is, and ground of all my bliss."

## XXXIV

"Now, noble sir, bliss thee betide,"

Then said she, lovesome of form and cheer,

"And welcome here to walk and bide,

For now thy speech I joy to hear.

Masterful mood, and haughty pride,

I rede thee, are bitterly hated here.

My Lord, too, loveth not to chide,

For meek are all that dwell him near ;

And when in his place thou shalt appear,

Be deep devout in pure meekness ;

That aye to my Lord the Lamb is dear,

That is the ground of all my bliss.

"A blissful life I lead, thou dost say,  
 Its state and manner thou wouldst gauge.  
 Thou know'st well, when thy pearl slipp'd away,  
 I was full young and tender of age ;  
 But the Lamb, my Lord, as his godhead may,  
 He took myself to his marriage,  
 Crown'd me queen in his bliss to stay,  
 Gave me eternal days to wage ;  
     And seized of all his heritage  
     His beloved are, I am wholly his ;  
     His praise, his price, his high peerage,  
     Are root and ground of all my bliss."

## XXXVI

“**B**LISSFUL,’ said I, “may this be true?  
And vex thee not if I err once more;

Art thou the queen of heaven blue,  
That all the world shall do honour for?

We believe on Mary, of whom grace grew,  
In virgin flower a child that bore;

The crown from her who might undo,

Save one who in favour pass’d her o’er?

Now her for sweetness supreme we adore,

And call her ‘Phoenix of Araby,’

That blameless liv’d her life of yore,

Like to the Queen of Courtesy.”

## XXXVII

“Courteous Queen,” that joy then said,

Kneeling to earth with cover’d face,

“Matchless mother, and mirthfullest maid,

Blessed beginner of every grace!”

Then rose she up, and still she staid,

And spoke to me across that space.

“Sir, here many seekers rich spoils have repaid,

But supplanters are none within this place.

That empress holds heaven in vassal case,

And earth and hell too in her fee;

From that heritage none may her displace,

For she is the queen of courtesy.

### XXXVIII

“ The court of the Living God’s realm doth thrive  
By a virtue its own, and ever seen ;  
Whoever may therein arrive  
Of all the realm is made king or queen ;  
Yet never one shall another deprive,  
But all rejoice in other’s demesne,  
And would that another’s crown were five,  
If possibly better that had been.

But my lady, Jesus’ mother, I mean,  
She holds the empire o’er us full high,  
And to none is that displeasing, I ween,  
For she is the queen of courtesy.

### XXXIX

“ By courtesy, St. Paul did say,  
All we are members of Christ by right,  
As head, arm, leg, and nail alway  
Belong to the body, in fealty plight ;  
So with Christian souls is the way,  
Each one is a limb of the Lord of Might. ✓  
Behold, whether hatred or any fray  
Among thy members comes ever to sight ;  
Thy head feels neither grief nor spite,  
Though rings on finger or arm there be ;  
So fare we all with love and delight,  
To king and queen, by courtesy.”

"Courtesy," said I, "I believe,  
 And a wondrous love is there you among; ✓  
 But, (let not now my speech thee grieve)  
 Methinks thou speak'st in this full wrong,  
 Thyself in heaven o'er high dost heave,  
 To make thee queen, that wast so young!  
 What honour more might he achieve  
 That had endured in this world, strong,  
 And lived in penance his life long,  
 With body's pain him bliss to buy,—  
 What worship more might him belong,  
 Than be crown'd king by courtesy?

“**T**HAT courtesy is too free, indeed,  
 If it be sooth that thou dost say.  
 With us on earth thou life didst lead  
 Not two years, nor unto God couldst pray,  
 Nor please him, nor knew’st or pater or creed;  
 And thou made queen on thy first day!  
 I may not think, so God me speed,  
 That he would deal so wrong a way.  
     A countess, damosel, by my fay,  
     Perhaps such rank thee heaven might lend,  
     Or else some lesser lady to stay;  
     But a queen, that is too high an end.”

## XLII

“But no end to his goodness stays,”  
 Then answer’d me that precious wight,  
 “Truth is in all his works and ways,  
 He cannot do or think but right.  
 Thus Matthew in your missal says,  
 In gospel true of the God of might;  
 He tells a parable, worthy all praise,  
 For a likeness of heaven’s kingdom bright.  
     Like, he says, is that realm of light,  
     To a lord who had a vineyard to tend,  
     And now came the time of year aright  
     When to labour there was the season’s end.

### XLIII

“ That end of the season well knew every hind;  
The lord full early up arose,  
For his vineyard workers to hire and find,  
And some were there, ready for his purpose.  
Now in agreement themselves they bind  
For a penny a day, and forth each goes,  
And painfully toils at the task assign’d,—  
Prunes, and fastens, and ties all close.

At noon, the mart to the master shows  
Men that stand idle, nor make, nor mend;  
‘ Why stand ye idle,’ he saith to those,  
‘ Know ye not for this day an end?’

### XLIV

“ ‘ Hither ere end of the night we won,’  
(They answered all with the selfsame thought)  
‘ Here have we stood since arose the sun,  
And no man hath bidden us do aught.’  
‘ To my vines go, do what ye may, each one,’  
Said that lord, and their labour too he bought;  
‘ What reasonable hire by night is run,  
I will pay you in full, even as I ought.’

They too went into the vines and wrought;  
And thus all day did the master wend,  
And new men to his vineyard brought,  
Till the day had almost reach’d its end.

" At end of the day, at evensong,  
 One hour before the sun would away,  
 He saw there idle men full strong,  
 And gently unto them did say,  
 ' Why stood ye here idle, all the day long ?'  
 They said, no man did their service pray.  
 ' Go to my vineyard, yeomen young,  
 And labour, and do even that ye may.'

Soon the world was all grown gray,  
 So late that the sun no light did lend ;  
 He call'd them, that he their hire might pay ;  
 The day was long since past its end.

“THE end of the day that lord did know;  
 ‘Pay the men,’ he cried to his reeve amain;  
 ‘Give them the hire that I them owe,  
 And further, that none may blame me in vain,  
 Set them all alike in a row,  
 And give to each a penny for gain.  
 Begin at the last, that standeth low,  
 Until to the first thou shalt attain,’  
 And then did the first begin to complain,  
 Saying that they had labour’d sore;  
 ‘These last but one hour did them pain;  
 It seemeth to us we should have more.

XLVII

“‘More have we served thee, we trow,  
 Who all have borne the heat of the day,  
 Than these, who came scarce two hours ago;  
 Yet thou makest them equal with us to weigh.’  
 Then answer’d that lord to one who spake so,  
 ‘Friend, I do thee no wrong; I say,  
 Take thou what is thine own, and go.  
 If I hir’d thee with promise a penny to pay,  
 Why beginn’st thou now in threatening way?  
 Didst thou not agree for a penny of yore?  
 Seek beyond covenant no man may;  
 Why dost thou then ask for more?

## XLVIII

“ ‘ More praiseworthy is not giving for me,  
And to do with mine own even as I will? —  
Or is thine eye bent evil to see,  
Because I am good, and do no man ill? ’  
‘ Thus shall I,’ saith Christ, ‘ decree;  
The last of all shall be first, still,  
And the first the last, though swift he be;  
For many are call’d, though few high place fill.’  
Thus, poor men not in vain shall till,  
Though they come late, and have small store,  
And though their labour little skill;  
The mercy of God is so much the more.

## XLIX

“ More have I of bliss and joy herein,  
Of the bloom of life, and ladyship great,  
Than all the creatures of earth might win,  
If their rights alone they ask’d of fate.  
Though scarcely did I my work begin,  
And the vineyard I enter’d at evening late,  
Yet my hire the master’s first care hath been;  
Fully and freely he paid me straight.  
Yet others there were who needs must wait,  
They toil’d and sweated for long of yore,  
But naught have receiv’d of their service’ rate,  
And perhaps shall not for a full year more.”

Then more I spoke, and boldly did say,  
 " Unreasonable, methinks, thy tale ;  
 God's justice is ready and watchful aye,  
 Or is Holy Writ but a fable frail.  
 In the Psalter a verse this point doth weigh,  
 Its meaning is clear, and cannot fail :  
 ' Each man to his worth thou dost repay,  
 High King, whom all-disposing we hail.'  
 Now he that bore the long day's assail,  
 If thou to payment pass him before,  
 Then the less in work doth the more avail,  
 And ever the longer, the less is more."

## LI

“**I**N the kingdom of God, on less or more,”  
 Said that gentle one, “no hazards wait;  
 For each alike is paid his store,  
 Whether his guerdon be small or great;  
 No niggard the gentle Chief we adore;  
 Whether soft or hard he deal the fate,  
 His gifts like damm’d-up waters outpour,  
 Or streams of the deep, that never abate.

Who aye fear’d him that from sin’s estate  
 Can rescue, hath largest franchise now;  
 No bliss upon him shall close the gate;  
 For the grace of God is great enow.

## LII

“To checkmate me now thou dost essay,—  
 That I wrongly have ta’en my penny here,  
 Too late a comer I, thou wouldst say,  
 And thus unworthy of hire so dear.  
 But knew’st thou e’er mortal, so strong to pray,  
 So constant in holiness to appear,  
 That he forfeited not, some time or way,  
 The meed of the heavenly kingdom clear?

And aye the oftener, the older they were,  
 They wrought amiss, and from right did bow;  
 Mercy and grace then must them steer,  
 For the grace of God is great enow.

### LIII

" But enow of grace have the innocent ;  
 As soon as they are born, with heed,  
 With water of baptism are they besprent ;  
 Straight to the vineyard thus they speed.  
 Anon, when the day with dark is blent,  
 And the night of death draws on, indeed,  
 They who wrought never wrong ere thence they went,  
 The gentle lord sees their service fee'd.

They did his hest, even where he did lead ;  
 Why should he not their labour allow,  
 And at first day's close pay them their meed ?  
 For the grace of God is great enow.

### LIV

" Enow is it known, God wrought man well,  
 And shap'd him for endless bliss aright ;  
 But our first father did forfeit and sell  
 That joy for an apple he would bite.  
 All we were condemn'd through that eating's spell,  
 To die in dolour, lost to delight,  
 And then to go to the heat of hell,  
 To dwell forever, beneath that blight :

But there came to us salvation's might ;  
 Rich blood the rough rood did endow,  
 And winsome water ; for in that plight,  
 The grace of God wax'd great enow.

"Enow there flow'd from out that well  
 Of blood and water, from bitter wound;  
 The blood us bought from bale of hell,  
 And from doom of the second death unbound.  
 The water is baptism, sooth to tell,  
 That follow'd the glaive full grimly ground;  
 It washeth away the guilt so fell,  
 Wherewith Adam in death us drown'd.

And there is naught in the world around  
 Between us and bliss, but He made it bow;  
 In that blessed season our path he found;  
 And the grace of God is great enow.

“E NOW of grace the man may have  
 That sinneth anew, if he repent;  
 But with sorrow and grief he must it crave,  
 And abide the pain that for sin is sent.  
 But reason, to right that ever clave,  
 Saves evermore the innocent;  
 It is a doom that God never gave,  
 That ever the guiltless should be shent.  
 The guilty may, in contrition bent,  
 To mercy come, and on grace alight;  
 But he that guile never knew or meant,  
 In his innocence is sav'd by right.

## LVII

“Right well I know of this same case,  
 God must save these two, and justice fulfill,—  
 The righteous man shall see his face,  
 And the blameless one shall be with him still.  
 This verse in Psalter ye may trace:  
 ‘Lord, who shall climb thy lofty hill,  
 Or rest within thy holy place?’  
 And swift doth he answer what is his will:  
 ‘He whose clean hands have done no ill,  
 That is of heart both pure and light,  
 There shall stand, and a firm place fill.’  
 The innocent is aye sav'd by right.

## LVIII

"The righteous, too, shall surely gain  
 His entrance to that glorious pile,  
 Who taketh not his life in vain,  
 Nor deceiveth his neighbour with any guile.  
 Of the righteous, Solomon saw plain  
 How our Lord him greeted with kindly smile;  
 In ways full strait did He him constrain,  
 And show'd him the kingdom of God awhile,  
     As who saith, 'Lo, yon lovely isle!  
     This may be won by hardy wight;'  
     But surely, and without perils vile,  
     The innocent is aye sav'd by right.

## LIX

"Of the righteous man ye may have read  
 The Psalter's words, by David applied,  
 'Lord, bring not thy servant to judgment dread;  
 For with thee none living is justified.'  
 So when to that court thou shalt be sped  
 Where all our causes judgment abide,  
 Through those same words that late I said,  
 Thou mayst in, if in righteousness thou confide;  
     But He on the bloody rood who died,  
     With hands sore piercèd by cruel might,  
     Grant thee to pass, when thou art tried,  
     By innocence, and not that right.

"He who aright to read doth know,  
 Let him take his book, and learn by its aid,  
 How Jesus was walking once, long ago,  
 And their little ones folk before him laid.  
 For the healing and help that from him did flow,  
 To touch their children they fair him pray'd;  
 His disciples harshly bade let him go,  
 And by their rebukes full many were stay'd.

Jesus then to them sweetly said,  
 'Give way, let the children come to my sight;  
 For such is the kingdom of heaven made.'  
 The innocent are aye sav'd by right.

## LXI

“JESUS call’d to him his little ones mild,  
 And said, his kingdom none enters in,  
 But come he thither right as a child, *welcome ?*  
 Or let him never that quest begin. *No*  
 Harmless, true, and undefil’d,  
 Without or spot or taint of sin;  
 When such shall knock on that wall strong-pil’d,  
 Swift shall men them the gate unpin;  
     There is the bliss that fades not within,  
     That the jeweller search’d for early and late;  
     Sold his linen and wool, yea, all he could win,  
     To buy him a pearl immaculate.

## LXII

“This immaculate pearl, was bought so dear,  
 That the jeweller more than all wealth it would,  
 To the kingdom of heaven hath likeness near,  
 So said the Father of land and flood:  
 For it is stainless, pure, and clear,  
 Round, without end, form’d in blissful mood,  
 And common to all that were righteous here;  
 And lo! amid my breast it stood.  
     My Lord the Lamb, that shed his blood,  
     In token of peace there set it late;  
     Forsake the mad world, it were thee good,  
     And purchase this pearl immaculate.”

### LXIII

“ O immaculate pearl, in pearls so pure,  
That bearest,” said I, “ the pearl of price,  
Who formed thee thy fair figure ?  
Who wrought thy weed, he was full wise ;  
Thy beauty came never of nature ;  
Pygmalion painted never those eyes ;  
Aristotle with all his learning, sure,  
Ne’er taught of thy kind and its properties.

Thy colour passeth the flor-de-lis, ✓  
Thine angel-bearing, how courteous-great !  
Tell me, bright one, what trust as prize  
Weareth that pearl immaculate ? ”

### LXIV

✓ “ My immaculate Lamb, that can bless all,”  
Said she, “ my beloved fix’d by lot,  
Chose me to his mate, though my worth was small ;  
Long ago was that bridal, I wot ;  
What time I from your world did fall,  
Then did he to me his bliss allot,  
‘ Come hither, my love, my sweet ! ’ was his call,  
‘ For thou hast neither blemish nor spot.’  
Beauty and might he withheld from me not,  
Wash’d my weeds in his blood on his throne of state,  
In maidenhood crown’d me withouten blot,  
And dight me in pearls immaculate.”

"O immaculate bride, that flam'st so bright,  
 And in riches and royalties so dost thrive,  
 Who is this Lamb of thy delight,  
 That thee would wed unto his wife?  
 How tak'st thou o'er others so high flight,  
 To lead with him such princely life?  
 How many maidens, fair to sight,  
 Have endur'd for Christ in pain and strife,  
     Yet all those dear ones canst thou outdrive,  
     And from that marriage all others abate,  
     All save thyself, in strength so rife,—  
     A matchless maid, and immaculate."

## LXVI

“IMMACULATE,” said that joyful queen,  
 Unblemish’d I am, withouten blot ;  
 That may I say with grace, I ween ;  
 But a matchless queen, that said I not.  
 Brides of the Lamb in bliss we been  
 A hundred and forty thousand, I wot,  
 As in the Apocalypse it is seen ;  
 St. John saw them cluster’d in a knot  
     On the hill of Zion, that goodly spot ;  
     The apostle saw them, in heavenly dream,  
     On that mountain array’d for their bridal lot,  
     In the city of New Jerusalem.

## LXVII

“ Of Jerusalem now will I tell :  
 If thou wilt know what kind he be,—  
 My Lamb, my lord, my dear jewèl,  
 My joy, my bliss, my true-love free,—  
 The prophet Isaiah told of him well,  
 Of his goodly grace full piteously.  
 Him guiltless and glorious, men did fell,  
 Though in him was never evil to see ;  
     As a sheep to the slaughter led was he ;  
     As a lamb that the shearer in field doth hem,  
     So clos’d he his mouth from plaint or plea,  
     When the Jews him judg’d in Jerusalem.

## LXVIII

“ In Jerusalem was my true-love slain,  
And rent on the rood by hirelings bold;  
All our ills to bear full fain,  
He took on himself our cares so cold.  
Buffets on his face did rain,  
That once so fair was to behold;  
For our sins he made himself in vain,  
Who ne’er himself to sin had yold.

For us he let them scourge, and hold,  
And stretch him on the rugged beam;  
As meek as lamb, no plaint he told;  
For us he died in Jerusalem.

## LXIX

“ Jerusalem, Jordan, and Galilee,  
There did baptise the good St. John;  
With Isaiah’s words according spake he,  
When Jesus unto him was gone;  
He said of him this prophecy,  
‘ Lo! the Lamb of God, the changeless One,  
That all the world shall yet set free  
From the sin it hath wrought beneath the sun.’

He himself yet sin had none,  
Though to himself he all did claim;  
His generation who may con,  
That died for us in Jerusalem?

" In Jerusalem thus my true-love sweet,  
 Twice to a lamb was liken'd there ;  
 Both prophets him thus in records treat,  
 For that meekly and gently he him bare ;  
 The third time is, and that is meet,  
 In Apocalypse written, with full great care ;  
 Amidst the throne, the saints' high seat,  
 The Apostle John of him was ware,  
     Unsealing the book with pages square,  
     Which seven signs set together hem ;  
     At that sight all creatures in terror stare,  
     In hell, in earth, and Jerusalem.

## LXXI

“**T**HIS Jerusalem lamb had never a stain,  
 Or hue but the winsome white, in life;  
 Spot or soil would attack in vain  
 That whitest wool, so rich and rife;  
 Thus every soul that no blemish has ta'en  
 Is unto that Lamb a worthy wife;  
 And though each day he bring many again,  
 Among us comes never dispute or strife;  
     We only would that each one were five,—  
     The more, the merrier, so God me bless;  
     By company great our love does thrive,  
     And honour is more, and never the less.

## LXXII

“To less of bliss none may us bring,  
 Who wear this pearl upon our breast;  
 For never ill to them could cling,  
 Of spotless pearls who bear the crest.  
 Although our corpses the clods enring,  
 And ye for ruth lament without rest,  
 Throughout, we have knowledge of everything;  
 For by One Death are all hopes blest.  
     The Lamb us gladdens, no grief is our guest,  
     At every feast his joy we possess;  
     The bliss of each is brightest and best,  
     And no one's honour ever the less.

"Less of thy faith should my tale command,  
 These words are writ in Apocalypse lore;  
 'I saw,' saith John, 'the Lamb then stand  
 In glory excelling, on Zion hoar;  
 Hundred thousand maidens were at his hand,  
 And four and forty thousand more;  
 And a writing all their foreheads spann'd,  
 The name of the Lamb and his Father they bore.  
     A voice from heaven then heard I pour,  
     As of many waters that rush and press,  
     As thunders on dark tors hurling roar,  
     That sound, I trow, was never the less.

## LXXIV

"Nevertheless, though loud did ring  
 That sound, and sudden was to hear,  
 A note full new I heard them sing;  
 To listen then was lovely-dear.  
 As harpers harp upon the string,  
 They sang that new song then full clear;  
 Resounding that noble music doth spring;  
 Full sweet then in chorus the strains they rear;  
     Before the throne of God right near,  
     With the four beasts that his might confess,  
     And the elders all of gravest cheer,  
     Sang they the song that was never the less.

## LXXV

“‘Nevertheless, was no wight aye,  
 For all the crafts that ever he knew,  
 That ever could sing one note of that lay,  
 Save the meinie that doth the Lamb ensue.  
 For they are bought from earth away,  
 As first-fruits assign’d to God all new;  
 To the gentle Lamb they are given alway,  
 As like to himself in look and hue:  
     For never a lie or word untrue  
     Was found on their tongue, for any distress.  
     That stainless meinie forever is due  
     To that spotless Master, and never the less.’”

## LXXVI

“Nevertheless my pearl I thank,”  
 Said I, “though questions still I pose;  
 I should not try thy mind so frank,  
 Whom Christ unto his chamber chose.  
 I bide but in dust and mire all rank,  
 And thou so rich and sweet a rose,  
 And dwell’st here on this blissful bank,  
 Where life its bloom may never lose;  
     Yet, sweet, whom simpleness erst did enclose,  
     I would thee ask one thing express;  
     Though too forward I be, like flame that blows,  
     Let my boon avail me, nevertheless.

## LXXVII

“NEVERTHELESS, on thee I call,  
 If it may be done, as thou canst see,  
 As glorious thou art, and stainless all,  
 Deny thou never my piteous plea.  
 Have ye no dwelling in castle wall,  
 No manor to bide and meet in free?  
 Of Jerusalem tellest thou, rich-royal,  
 That David dear call’d on its throne to be;  
 But with these holts that doth not agree;  
 Judæa that noble delight hath got;  
 As undefil’d ’neath the moon are ye,  
 Your dwelling should be withouten spot.

## LXXVIII

“This spotless meinie thou dost me declare,  
 A throng of thousands, so mighty a rout,—  
 A city vast, since so many are there,  
 Ye behoove to have, withouten doubt.  
 So joyous a wealth of jewels fair,  
 ’Twere evil done should lie without;  
 Yet, tarrying here on this bank, nowhere  
 See I hall or castle hereabout.  
 Here ye but come and linger out  
 To look on this fair stream’s glory, I wot;  
 If thou hast dwelling fixed and stout,  
 Now lead me to that happy spot.”

## LXXIX

"That spot thou mean'st in Judæa's land,"  
 (That creature wondrous to me then spake)  
 "Is the town where the Lamb first took his stand,  
 To suffer sore for mortals' sake;  
 The Old Jerusalem, understand,  
 For that he the old guilt there did slake;  
 But the New, that came shining from God's own hand,  
 The saint for Apocalypse' theme did take.  
     The Lamb there with never a speck or flake,  
     The fair flock too that he there hath brought,—  
     As their whiteness hath never blemish nor break,  
     So too that place is withouten spot.

## LXXX

"Of these two spots aright to ween,  
 Both Jerusalem called in their degrees,—  
 Naught, I rede thee, that name doth mean  
 But City of God, or Sight of Peace.  
 In the one our peace made whole hath been;  
 Pain there to suffer the Lamb did please;  
 In the other is naught but peace to glean,  
 The same forever, that shall not cease.  
     That is the bourne where the spirit flees  
     When that our flesh is laid to rot;  
     There glory and bliss shall ever increase  
     To the meinie that is withouten spot."

"Spotless maid, so mild and meek,"  
 Then said I to that lovely flower,  
 "That noble pile now let me seek,  
 And bring me to thy blissful bower."  
 "God grants not," said that bright one eek;  
 "Thou mayst not enter within his tower;  
 But for thee from the Lamb did I well bespeak  
 For a sight thereof, through his favour's dower.

See that pure cloister thou mayst this hour,  
 Without; but within it thy foot falls not;  
 To step in those streets hast thou no power,  
 But thou wert clean withouten spot.

## LXXXII

“**W**ILT thou see the spot where it doth hide,  
 Bend thy steps up toward this river's head,  
 And across from thee upon this side,  
 I will follow, till thou to a hill hast led.”  
 Then there would I no longer bide ;  
 By fair-leav'd boughs I softly fled,  
 Till a hill before me I espied,  
 And beheld the city, as up I sped.  
     Beyond the stream, far from me, that stead,  
     That brighter than sun, with clear beams shone ;  
     In Apocalypse its fashion is read,  
     As describeth it the Apostle John.

## LXXXIII

As John the apostle saw the sight,  
 Saw I that city high-renown'd,  
 Jerusalem the New, full royally dight,  
 As it new alighted from heaven was found.  
 Of pure gold all that burgh was built,  
 Burnish'd, it gleam'd like glass around,  
 With precious gems beneath it pight ;  
 The base with courses twelve was crown'd,  
     Foundations twelve, full richly bound,  
     And a special stone each tier thereon ;  
     As well that city's praise doth sound,  
     In Apocalypse, the Apostle John.

## LXXXIV

As John in writ these stones did name,  
 Their kinds I well through him could trace ;  
 Jasper was call'd the first fair gem,  
 I saw it the first foundation grace,  
 Green it gleam'd, and the base did hem.  
 Sapphire then held the second place ;  
 Chalcedony spotless was third of them,  
 Purely pale it shone in the space ;  
     The fourth tier emerald green did face  
     The fifth sardonyx was laid upon ;  
     The sixth a ruby is, as says  
     In Apocalypse, the Apostle John.

## LXXXV

Then added John the chrysolite,  
 The seventh gem that foundation knew ;  
 The eight was beryl, clear and white,  
 And ninth came topaz, of twofold hue ;  
 Chrysophrase the tenth is hight ;  
 Eleventh, did precious jacinth ensue ;  
 The twelfth is ever the fairest to sight,  
 The amethyst, purple, blent with blue.  
     The wall that overhung them, anew,  
     Was jasper, like gleaming glass that shone ;  
     I knew it by his description true  
     In Apocalypse, the Apostle John.

As John describ'd, so saw I there  
 Those twelve steps, broad and steep to sight;  
 The city stood above, all square,  
 Alike in length and breadth and height;  
 The streets of gold like glass lay bare,  
 The jasper wall gleam'd with amber's light;  
 The dwellings within adorned were  
 With store of far-brought jewels bright.

And every way the city site  
 Full twelve furlongs' length did run;  
 So high, so long, so broad aright,  
 For it measur'd saw the Apostle John.

## LXXXVII

**O**F what John beheld, more did I descry ;  
 That town hath in every wall three gates,  
 That twelve in order I might espy ;  
 Deck'd were the portals with richest plates ;  
 Each gate one perfect pearl saw I,  
 Whose glory dims never, nor abates ;  
 And each a name doth bear on high,  
 Of the children of Israel, after their dates,  
     As the order of their birth them rates ;  
     The eldest are aye first in that rune ;  
     And such light that city floods and sates,  
     It needeth neither sun nor moon.

## LXXXVIII

They have no need of moon or sun,  
 For God's self is their lamp of light,  
 The Lamb their lantern, ever one ;  
 Through him beams all the city bright.  
 Through wall and dwelling mine eyes did run,  
 For clear so rare hides naught from sight.  
 The high throne might I look upon,  
 With all its rich array bedight,  
     As John hath told in words of might.  
     High God's self thereon saw I soon ;  
     A river there ran from the throne outright,  
     Was brighter than both the sun and moon.

## LXXXIX

Sun or moon shone never so sweet  
As that rich flood which there doth rise ;  
Swiftly it surgeth through every street,  
Nor slime nor stain in its waters lies.  
No church doth that city's dwellers greet ;  
Nor chapel nor temple behold their eyes ;  
The Almighty One is their minster meet,  
The Lamb their redeeming sacrifice.

Ne'er clos'd are those portals in any wise,  
But open at every lane, late and soon ;  
None there to enter for refuge tries,  
That beareth blemish beneath the moon.

## XC

The moon hath there nor place nor might ;  
Too spotted is she, too wan and grim ;  
Moreover, since never there is night,  
Why her course should she thither swim,  
And liken herself with that noble light  
That shineth upon the river's brim ?  
The planets are in too poor a plight,  
And the sun himself far, far too dim.

Fair trees that glorious water rim,  
That bear twelve fruits of life full soon ;  
Twelve times in the year they richly them trim,  
And renew it all fresh with every moon.

Under the moon, such marvel plac'd,  
 No heart of flesh aye might endure,  
 As when upon that spot I gaz'd,  
 So fair was it, beyond measure.  
 As still I stood as quail bedaz'd,  
 For wonder of that vision's lure;  
 No feeling rest or travail rais'd,  
 So was I ravish'd with glory pure;  
     For I dare say, with conscience sure,  
     If mortal in body abode that boon,  
     Though all the clerks had him in cure,  
     His life were lost beneath the moon.

## XCII

As when the mighty moon doth rise  
 Ere day-gleam, dimming, hath sunk all down,  
 So, suddenly, in wondrous wise,  
 A moving host to me was known,  
 Soundless, unsummon'd, before mine eyes :  
 Suddenly, all that noble town  
 Was fill'd with virgins in that same guise  
 As my blissful one that ware the crown.

Crown'd too were all they, and white of gown,  
 In selfsame fashion with pearls bedight ;  
 And firm on each breast that rare renown,  
 That blissful pearl of great delight.

## XCIII

In great delight together they were,  
 On the gold ways gliding, as glass that gleam ;  
 Hundred thousands in all were here,  
 And all alike their array, I deem ;  
 'Twas hard to know the gladdest cheer.  
 Stately the Lamb led on that stream ;  
 Seven horns had he of the red gold clear,  
 Like pearls of price did his raiment beam.

No press there was, though such throng did teem,  
 As toward the throne they far'd aright ;  
 Mild as at mass young maidens seem,  
 So drew they on with great delight.

## XCIV

Delight that there His coming bred,  
 Too great it was for me to tell:  
 The elders, when he near was sped,  
 Prostrate before his feet they fell.  
 Legions of angels, there summoned,  
 Cast incense forth, of sweetest smell;  
 New glee and glory abroad were spread;  
 All sang to praise that bright Jewèl:  
     That voice might strike through earth to hell.  
     Of the heavenly Virtues in joy and might;  
     To praise the Lamb in his meinie well,  
     In truth, methought it great delight.

## XCV

Delight of that Lamb before mine eyes,  
 And marvel great, in my mind there went;  
 Best was he, blithest, and most to prize  
 Of all on whom speech was ever spent.  
 So nobly white his garment and guise;  
 So gentle he look'd, so simple his bent;  
 But a wound full wide and wet there lies  
 Anigh his heart, where the skin is rent;  
     From his white side the blood is sprent,—  
     “Alas,” thought I, “who did that spite?  
     What breast in pain had not outbrent,  
     Ere it in that had found delight?”

The Lamb's delight none doubt, I ween;  
 Though he were hurt with wound so sad,  
 Naught in his semblance was it seen,  
 His looks were all so glorious-glad.  
 I turn'd, among his meinie sheen  
 To see how Life them fill'd and clad,—  
 Then saw I there my little queen,  
 Methought I still beside me had;

Ah Lord! what mirth I heard her add,  
 Among her peers that was so white!  
 To cross the stream that sight me bade,  
 For love-longing and great delight.

## XCVII

**D**ELIGHT so grew to hear and see,  
 In madness melted my mortal thought ;  
 When I saw my joy, there would I be,  
 Though beyond the water she must be sought.  
 Nothing, I ween'd, might hinder me ;  
 To halt my onrush there was naught ;  
 And to plunge in the stream if I were free,  
 I would swim the rest, though my death it wrought.  
     But from that purpose soon was I brought ;  
     As I would leap, all wildly still,  
     Out of that passion I was caught ;  
     It was not to my Prince's will.

## XCVIII

'Twas not his will I should fling me there  
 O'er those mystic bounds, in mad array ;  
 Though headlong I rush'd, nor haste did spare,  
 Yet suddenly my course had stay ;  
 Up the bank as I push'd, without heed or care,  
 That fury drove my dream away ;  
 I awaken'd then in that arbour fair ;  
 My head upon that same mound lay  
     Where my pearl in the grass had gone astray.  
     I rous'd me, and fell in a terror ill ;  
     Then sighing, to myself did say,  
     " Now all be to that Prince's will ! "

## XCIX

Sore against my will was I outcast  
 So sudden from that region fair,  
 Those sights of living joy all past.  
 Deep longing sent me swooning there,  
 And mournfully I cried at last,  
 "O Pearl," said I, "thou rich and rare,  
 How dear to me what thou steadfast  
 Didst in this vision true declare !

If thou in very sooth dost wear  
 That crown so bright and glorious still,  
 'Tis well for me, in this dungeon of care,  
 That thou art to that Prince's will."

## C

To that Prince's will had I ever bent,  
 And crav'd no more than he gave me aye,  
 And held me there in faithful intent,  
 As the Pearl so exalted did me pray,  
 When thus God's presence by grace was lent,  
 More mysteries had I seen that day.  
 But ever more good than can be sent  
 By right, a man will seize, if he may ;

Thus was my joy soon snatch'd away,  
 And I cast from the realm that endureth still ;  
 Who strive against thee, Lord, mad are they,  
 Or offer thee aught against thy will.

With that Prince's will in peace to agree  
 Is easy for Christ's folk, and full of cheer;  
 He hath been through all my days to me  
 A God, a master, a friend without peer.—  
 On that mound it befell me these things to see,  
 Prone, for my pearl in grief so drear;  
 And then to God I yielded her free,  
 With my blessing, and Christ's, whose love is near;  
     The priest who the bread and wine doth uprear  
     Daily to us Him showeth still;  
     He grant us to be His servants dear,  
     And precious pearls unto His will!

*Amen, Amen.*



## BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTE







## BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

THE present rendering owes much help to Dr. Osgood's purer text, as well as to his interpretations, in both his edition and his translation. But since the learned do not always agree, the translator has at times felt privileged to exercise a choice; so that some readings are those of Gollancz and of Holthausen. The translator wishes to acknowledge also an indebtedness to Mr. Israel Gollancz's version for a number of happy suggestions, and to mention that her prefatory pages were written before the reading of Dr. Osgood's Introduction to his text, in which, amid a very full and systematic discussion of both literary and scholarly questions, are some similarities of thought.

To translate a poem is to attempt the impossible; but the aim of this rendering has been to express faithfully the spirit of the old poet in his own verse-form, and, so far as might be, in language as simple and direct as his own. The few slight liberties taken are only expansions or heightenings of the poet's own thought, not the additions of a personal fancy.

## I. THE ORIGINAL TEXT:

*The Pearl* was preserved for us, almost miraculously, as Mr. Gollancz intimates, in one manuscript alone, the British Museum's "Cotton Nero A x," (new number, +4). This and three other poems, *Cleanness*, *Patience*, and *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, believed, from similarity of dialect and thought, to be by the same writer, are bound up together with some unrelated matters. Till 1864, when Dr. Richard Morris searched out these fourteenth century treasures for the Early English Text Society, the nature of these poems was quite unknown, previous examinations of the manuscript having been baffled by the difficulties of the script and the obscure dialect.

## II. EDITIONS OF THE PEARL:

*Early English Alliterative Poems in the West-Midland Dialect of the Fourteenth Century.* Edited by Rev. Richard Morris, LL.D. Early English Text Society I. London, 1864. Revised and reprinted, 1869, 1885, 1896, 1901.

*Pearl, an English Poem of the Fourteenth Century.* Edited, with a Modern Rendering, by Israel Gollancz, M.A., London, 1891. David Nutt.

## BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

(A new and revised rendering by Professor Gollancz is announced as forthcoming in the Florence Press Series, London: Chatto and Windus.)

*The Pearl, a Middle English Poem.* Edited, with introduction, notes, and glossary, by Charles G. Osgood, Jr., Ph.D., 1906. Boston and London. D. C. Heath & Co.

### III. TRANSLATIONS:

Mr. Gollancz, as above.

S. Weir Mitchell, *Pearl, Rendered into Modern English Verse.* New York, 1906, Century Co. Reprinted by Thomas B. Mosher, Portland, Maine, in *The Bibelot*, XIV, 7, 1908. Sixty copies were also printed on hand-made paper for presentation purposes. Renders about half the poem.

G. G. Coulton, *Pearl, Rendered into Modern English.* London, 1906, David Nutt. A complete version in the verse of the original.

Charles G. Osgood, Jr., *The Pearl rendered in Prose.* Princeton, N. J., 1907. Published by the Translator.

(The beautiful story of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* is easily accessible in the volume of *Everyman's Library* called *Fairy Gold*.)

Readers interested in the literary criticism of *The Pearl* will find Dr. Osgood's Intro-

duction to his translation an enlightening and deeply thoughtful study of the spiritual content of the poem. Ten Brink's *History of English Literature*, I, 336-351, is recommended as a general description of this piece and the three others by the same author. Much of the material, interesting though largely speculative, of the introduction to the Gollancz edition, now out of print, may be found, with recent additions, in Mr. Gollancz's article in the *Cambridge English Literature*, I. The theory propounded by Dr. Schofield, in the *Publications of the Modern Language Association of America*, XIX, 154-215, (*The Pearl: its Nature and Fabric*) that the poem is not an elegy at all, and has only an allegorical import, in spite of his distinguished authority appears to have met with no very general acceptance among scholars. The point seems one for literary criticism quite as much as for pure scholarship, and one ventures to think that a jury of Matthew Arnolds or A. C. Bradleys would not long hesitate to give a verdict for the defendant.



## NOTES

Stanza IV, line 3. This "high season" is thought to be, very appropriately, the feast of the Assumption of the Virgin, August fifteenth.

Stanza XXXVI, line 12. "Courtesy" in this and the following stanzas means "nobleness, generosity, benevolence, goodness." The New English Dictionary, after defining the word as above, quotes from a sermon of Wiclif, 1380: "Crist, of his curtasie, interpretith ther wordis to goode."

Stanza XL, line 4. This line is supplied by Mr. Gollancz, one having been omitted here by the scribe.

Stanza LXX, line 12. The *New* Jerusalem is here meant,—thus, in hell, earth and heaven.

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